

# The Watergate Scandal

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1968: Richard Milhous Nixon elected President on the Republican ticket

1972: Nixon runs for re-election

Watergate Scandal: a political scandal of the early 1970's that centered around breaking in to the Democratic National Committee headquarters to steal information ending in prosecution of several high ranking Republican officials and the resignation of the 37<sup>th</sup> POTUS, Richard Nixon.

June 17, 1972:

- Security Guard Frank Mills at the Watergate Complex, discovers tape over some of the locks
- After removing the tape, he returns to his rounds. Upon his return, he finds the same doors with tape again over the locks
- Again, he removes the tape this time calling the police
  - When the police arrive, they find 5 men(Working for the Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREEP))
    - Virgilio Gonzalez
    - Bernard Baker
    - James McCord
    - Eugenio Martinez
    - Frank Sturgis
  - Nixon denies knowing anything about it
  - They were arrested and charged with breaking and entering and attempted interception of telephone and other communications
  - When they were tried, the judge suspected that higher ranking officials were involved in the situation
    - James McCord wrote a letter to the judge saying that high Republican officials were involved
    - McCord's story were heard by the special Senate Committee designed to investigate
    - John Dean, a White House lawyer, said that McCord was telling the truth and that Nixon was attempting to cover up any involvement he had in it
    - Further damaging evidence showed up in documents linking Nixon to the whole thing
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  - March of 1974: Former Attorney General John Mitchell and six other Nixon aides were indicted and convicted of blocking the investigation
  - May 1974: The world becomes a better place: Mrs. Thornsby is born!!!!
  - Nixon continued denying any involvement but was secretly recording conversations in his office

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- When news of the tapes surfaced, Nixon refused to hand them over claiming executive privilege that they were his personal property
  - He finally agreed to turn them over to Prosecutors but had destroyed some of them
  - Revealed that the burglars were paid “hush money”
  - Supreme Court case *United States v. Nixon* denied the presidents attempt to claim the tapes as personal property because not even the president is above the law
  - When the tapes are finally released, they show extensive evidence that the president had been deeply involved in the Watergate cover-up
  - On the tape that seemed to do the most damage, Nixon is recorded ordering pay-offs and other illegal activities
- Summer of 1974: the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee approved the motion of impeachment against Nixon for obstructing justice
- In August of 1974, Nixon resigned (he is the only one to have done so!)
- Gerald Ford becomes 38<sup>th</sup> President
- Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein of the *Washington Post* helped keep this in the news by using anonymous sources to gain their information
  - Deep Throat was the name given to the source they used
    - Many years later identified as William Mark Felt, Sr. who was the FBI's number 2 official when he retired
  - With the information Woodward and Bernstein had, they uncovered that the cover-up of the break in went deep into the Justice Department
- Gerald Ford (in what proved to be an unpopular move) gave Nixon an unconditional pardon, probably costing him re-election in 1976
- As a result of the Watergate Scandal, American's had a great deal of distrust for the government and politicians of the time
- Richard Nixon never did admit any wrong doing in the scandal
- He died in 1994 of a stroke after spending many years travelling and becoming more of an expert on foreign policy thus regaining some credibility